



ASSOCIATION FOR CLINICAL ONCOLOGY  
KNOWLEDGE CONQUERS CANCER

March 31, 2025

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Representative Susan Donovan, Chair  
House Committee on Health and Human Services  
Room 135 Rhode Island General Assembly  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Chair Donovan and Members of the House Committee on Health and Human Services,

The Association for Clinical Oncology (ASCO) is pleased to support **HB 5119**, which would update and clarify existing statute related to step therapy procedures.

ASCO is the world's leading professional society representing physicians who care for people with cancer. With over 50,000 members, our core mission is to ensure that patients with cancer have meaningful access to high-quality cancer care.

ASCO is committed to supporting policies that reduce cost while preserving quality of cancer care; it is critical that such policies be developed and implemented in a way that does not undermine patient access. Payer utilization management approaches like step therapy protocols are of particular concern because they represent greater likelihood of raising barriers to appropriate care for individuals with cancer. While many treatments preferred by payers cost less, they may not be the best treatment available for the patient.

Step therapy or fail first policies can be particularly problematic for patients with cancer because they can significantly delay a patient's access to the best treatment available for their condition. While waiting to complete a "step," a patient with cancer may experience disease progression and irreversible damage to their overall health.

ASCO is pleased that HB 5119 would place guardrails around step therapy by requiring carriers to grant an exception to a step therapy protocol if:

- The drug required to be used is contraindicated or is expected to cause an adverse reaction;
- The drug required to be used has been tried and found to be ineffective;
- The drug has not been tried but is expected to be ineffective;
- It will delay or prevent medically necessary care; or
- It will disrupt the patient's current effective drug regimen.

This bill would also ensure timely access to care by requiring that a step therapy exemption request must be answered within 72 hours under normal circumstances or within 24 hours if the request is urgent.

ASCO appreciates the steps that HB 5119 takes toward improving step therapy procedures in Rhode Island, and we urge the Committee to pass this measure. Please contact Sarah Lanford at ASCO at [Sarah.Lanford@asco.org](mailto:Sarah.Lanford@asco.org) if you have any questions or if we can be of assistance.

Sincerely,



Eric P. Winer, MD, FASCO  
Chair of the Board  
Association for Clinical Oncology